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C O N F I D E N T I A L YEREVAN 000707

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SNEC (AMB MANN) AND EUR/CACEN

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [TU](#) [AM](#)

SUBJECT: KOCHARIAN RESPONSE TO ERDOGAN LETTER

Classified By: Ambassador John M. Evans for Reason 1.5 (b) and (d).

Summary

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1. (C) On April 20, FM Oskanian told us that President Kocharian had drafted a response to PM Erdogan's letter and the letter would be transmitted on April 21. Oskanian described the letter as agreeing to some of the substance in PM Erdogan's letter, but proposed -- instead of creating a joint group of historians -- an inter-governmental commission which could push forward on a range of issues, including a study of the events of 1915. While we have not seen the text of the letter, if FM Oskanian's representation is accurate, it represents a step forward from the combative stance Armenia previously articulated. End Summary.

2. (C) PM Erdogan's April 10 letter to President Kocharian made the news in Yerevan, despite the cacophony of competing high-profile events to commemorate the Armenian tragedy of 1915. DCM met with FM Oskanian on the margin of one such event on April 20 and pressed him about whether President Kocharian had received PM Erdogan's letter and asked whether a response would be forthcoming.

3. (C) FM Oskanian said that President Kocharian had received the letter, but only recently. A response had been drafted and would be sent to Ankara on April 21. Oskanian said that Armenia would not dismiss the Turkish proposals. He acknowledged that Armenia's response to previous calls for "study groups" had been dismissive, since these calls were viewed by Yerevan as distractions and a smokescreen for EU critics of Turkey's stance on the events of 1915.

4. (C) But Armenia recognized that PM Erdogan's letter deserved a more careful response. He said that President Kocharian's response agreed with much of the first paragraph of PM Erdogan's letter. Turkey and Armenia do share a common history and geography. Rather than reject Turkey's interpretation of the Armenian Tragedy, Kocharian's letter simply agreed that Turkey and Armenia have diverging interpretations of events. Oskanian said that the Armenian response then posed a rhetorical question: How many states in Europe which share a border do not have such diverging interpretations of events while still maintaining diplomatic relations and open borders?

5. (C) Oskanian said that Armenia proposed to form with Turkey an inter-governmental commission to work toward resolution of all the issues preventing a return to normal diplomatic relations, including a study of events of 1915. Oskanian summarized Kocharian's letter as saying "both yes and no" to PM Erdogan's letter. "Yes" to the fact that Armenia and Turkey have -- and will almost certainly continue to have -- differing views of events of 1915. "No" to creating a joint historical study group outside of a structure to discuss other issues aimed at restoring diplomatic relations and opening the border.

Comment

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6. (C) We will work to get the final text of the Kocharian letter. If it tracks with Oskanian's description (and we expect it will), then it shows a more measured approach toward insisting on Turkey's recognition of events of 1915 as genocide. While Armenia would never publicly "agree to disagree" with Turkey on recognition, we can certainly imagine a scenario in which -- if Turkey would open the border and/or agree to discuss establishing diplomatic relations -- Armenia would agree to find a way to de facto put the issue on hold.

EVANS